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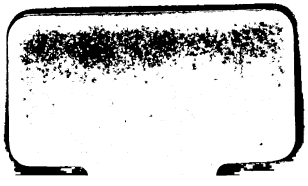

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THE

MAY QUEEN

BY

ALFRED TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. V. B.

LONDON :
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ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear 5

There's many a black black eye, they say, but none so bright as mine . 6

I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake 7

As I came up the valley, whom think ye should I see 8

Vignette 9

And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May . 10

The honeysuckle round the porch has wov'n its wavy bowers 11

The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the meadow-grass . . . 12

Vignette 13

Vignette 14

Vignette 15

To-night I saw the sun set: he set and left behind 16

Vignette 17

I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again 18

And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer o'er the wave . . . 19

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of mine 20

Vignette 21

You'll kiss me, my own mother, and forgive me ere I go 22

Though you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face 23

List of Illustrations.

PAGE

Vignette 24

But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rose-bush that I set 25

End of New Year's Eve 26

To die before the snowdrop came, and now the violet's here 27

And sweeter far is death than life to me that long to go 28

* * * * * *His will be done* 29

Now, though my lamp was lighted late, there's One will let me in . . 30

* * * * * *When the night and morning meet* 31

But sit beside my bed, mother, and put your hand in mine 32

All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call 33

I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer here 34

Vignette 35

But, Effie, you must comfort her when I am past away 36

Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine 37

Vignette 38

To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your breast 39

THE MAY QUEEN.

YOU must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear;

To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad New-year;

Of all the glad New-year, mother, the maddest merriest day;

For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The May Queen.

There's many a black black eye, they say, but none so bright as mine ;
There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caroline :

But none so fair as little Alice, in all the land they say,
So I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The May Queen.

I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake,
If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break :

But I must gather knots of flowers, and buds and garlands gay,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The May Queen.

As I came up the valley, whom think ye should I see,

But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-tree?

He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him yesterday,—

But I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in white,
And I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of light.
They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what they say ;
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

They say he's dying all for love, but that can never be :
They say his heart is breaking, mother—what is that to me ?
There's many a bolder lad 'ill woo me any summer day,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The May Queen.

Little Effie shall go with me to-morrow to the green,

And you'll be there, too, mother, to see me made the Queen ;

For the shepherd lads on every side 'ill come from far away,

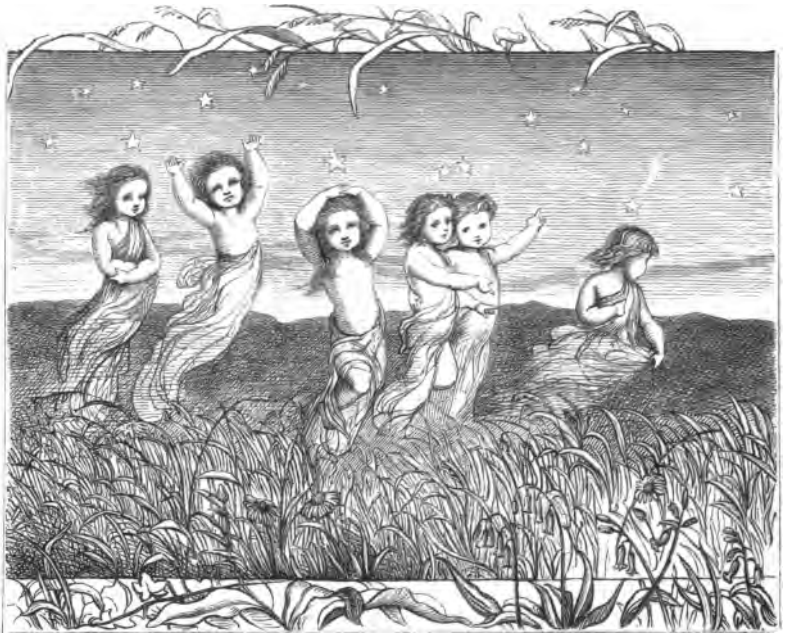
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May

The honeysuckle round the porch has wov'n its wavy bowers,

And by the meadow-trenches blow the faint sweet cuckoo-flowers ;

The May Queen.

And the wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.



The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the meadow-grass,
And the happy stars above them seem to brighten as they pass;
There will not be a drop of rain the whole of the live-long day,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The May Queen.

All the valley, mother, 'ill be fresh and green and still,
And the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the hill,

And the rivulet in the flowery dale 'ill merrily glance and play,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The May Queen.

So you must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear,
To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad New-year:
To-morrow 'ill be of all the year the maddest merriest day,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

If you're waking call me early, call me early, mother dear,

For I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year.

It is the last New-year that I shall ever see,

Then you may lay me low i' the mould and think no more of me.

The May Queen.

To-night I saw the sun set: he set and left behind
The good old year, the dear old time, and all my peace of mind;

And the New-year's coming up, mother, but I shall never see
The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree.

New Year's Eve.

Last May we made a crown of flowers: we had a merry day;
Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me Queen of May;

And we danced about the may-pole and in the hazel copse,
Till Charles's Wain came out above the tall white chimney-tops.

The May Queen.

There's not a flower on all the hills : the frost is on the pane :
I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again :

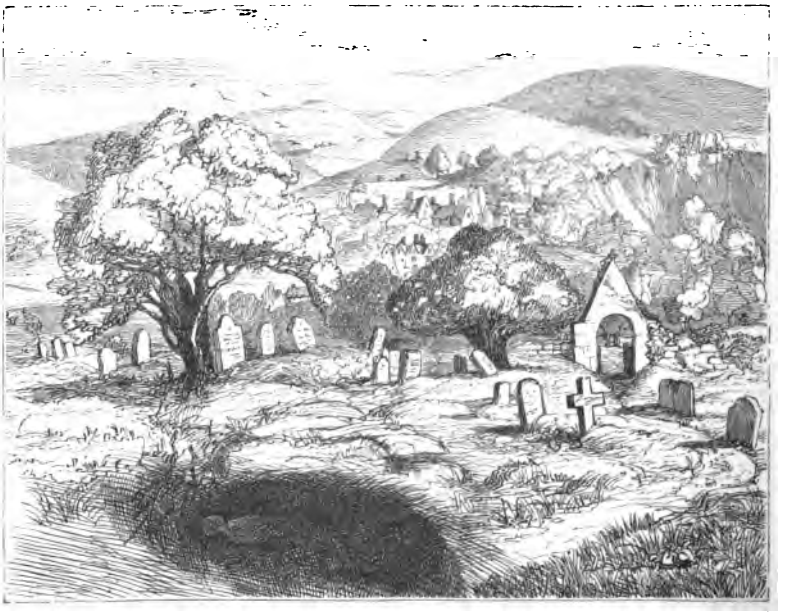
I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out on high :
I long to see a flower so before the day I die.

New Year's Eve.

The building rook 'ill caw from the windy tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,

And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer o'er the wave,
But I shall lie alone, mother, within the mouldering grave.

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of mine,
In the early early morning the summer sun 'ill shine,



Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the hill,
When you are warm-asleep, mother, and all the world is still.

New Year's Eve.

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the waning light,
You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at night;
When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in the pool.

You'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the hawthorn shade,
And you'll come sometimes and see me where I am lowly laid.

The May Queen.

I shall not forget you, mother, I shall hear you when you pass,
With your feet above my head in the long and pleasant grass.

I have been wild and wayward, but you'll forgive me now;
You'll kiss me, my own mother, and forgive me ere I go;

New Year's Eve.

Nay, nay, you must not weep, nor let your grief be wild,
You should not fret for me, mother, you have another child.

If I can I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-place ;
Though you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face

Though I cannot speak a word, I shall hearken what you say,
And be often, often with you when you think I'm far away.

Goodnight, goodnight, when I have said goodnight for evermore,
And you see me carried out from the threshold of the door ;
Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be growing green :
She'll be a better child to you than ever I have been.

She'll find my garden-tools upon the granary floor :
Let her take 'em : they are hers : I shall never garden more :

But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rose-bush that I set
About the parlour-window and the box of mignonette.

The May Queen.

Goodnight, sweet mother : call me before the day is born.
All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn ;
But I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year,
So, if you're waking, call me, call me early, mother dear.

CONCLUSION.

I THOUGHT to pass away before, and yet alive I am ;
And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the lamb.
How sadly, I remember, rose the morning of the year!
To die before the snowdrop came, and now the violet's here.

The May Queen.

O sweet is the new violet, that comes beneath the skies,

And sweeter is the young lamb's voice to me that cannot rise,

And sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers that blow,

And sweeter far is death than life to me that long to go.

Conclusion.

It seem'd so hard at first, mother, to leave the blessed sun,

And now it seems as hard to stay, and yet His will be done !

But still I think it can't be long before I find release ;

And that good man, the clergyman, has told me words of peace.

O blessings on his kindly voice and on his silver hair !

And blessings on his whole life long, until he meet me there !

O blessings on his kindly heart and on his silver head!

A thousand times I blest him, as he knelt beside my bed.

He taught me all the mercy, for he show'd me all the sin.

Now, though my lamp was lighted late, there's One will let me in:

Conclusion.

Nor would I now be well, mother, again, if that could be,
For my desire is but to pass to Him that died for me.

I did not hear the dog howl, mother, or the death-watch beat,
There came a sweeter token when the night and morning meet :

But sit beside my bed, mother, and put your hand in mine,

And Effie on the other side, and I will tell the sign.

Conclusion.

All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call;
It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was over all;

The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,
And in the wild March-morning I heard them call my soul.

For lying broad awake I thought of you and Effie dear;
I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer here.

With all my strength I pray'd for both, and so I felt resign'd,
And up the valley came a swell of music on the wind.

Conclusion.

I thought that it was fancy, and I listen'd in my bed,
And then did something speak to me—I know not what was said ;
For great delight and shuddering took hold of all my mind,
And up the valley came again the music on the wind.

But you were sleeping ; and I said, " It's not for them : it's mine."
And if it comes three times, I thought, I take it for a sign.
And once again it came, and close beside the window-bars,
Then seem'd to go right up to Heaven and die among the stars.

So now I think my time is near. I trust it is. I know
The blessed music went that way my soul will have to go.
And for myself, indeed, I care not if I go to-day.
But, Effie, you must comfort *her* when I am past away.

And say to Robin a kind word, and tell him not to fret ;
There's many worthier than I, would make him happy yet.

Conclusion.

If I had lived—I cannot tell—I might have been his wife ;
But all these things have ceased to be, with my desire of life.

O look ! the sun begins to rise, the heavens are in a glow ;
He shines upon a hundred fields, and all of them I know.
And there I move no longer now, and there his light may shine—
Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine.

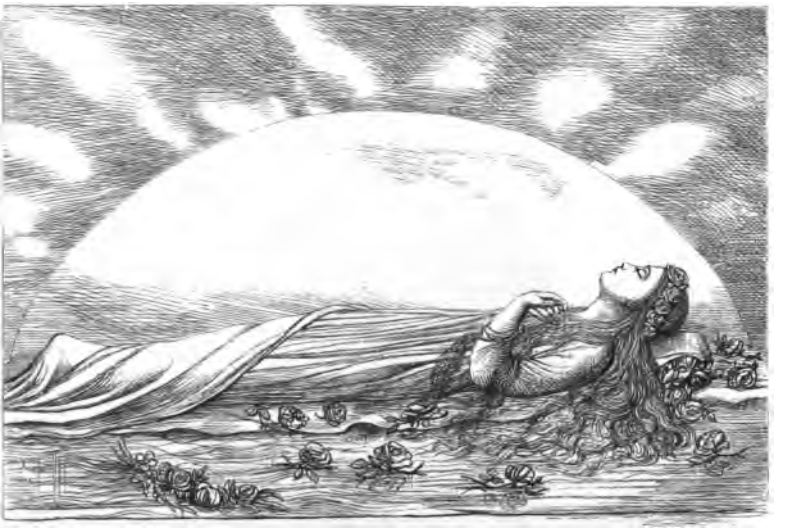
The May Queen.

O sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this day is done,
The voice, that now is speaking, may be beyond the sun—

For ever and for ever with those just souls and true—
And what is life, that we should moan? why make we such ado?

Conclusion.

To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your breast—
For ever and for ever, all in a blessed home—



And there to wait a little while till you and Effie come—
And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

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